



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
D.C. Water and Sewer Authority  
Board of Directors  
Customer and Community Services Committee**

**Thursday, July 6, 2006  
(following the Board meeting)**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Board Members Present**

Alexander McPhail, Chair  
Brenda Richardson  
Lisa Morgan  
Howard Gibbs  
Joseph Cotruvo  
David J. Bardin

**Staff Members**

Charles Kiely, Ass't General Manager  
Eva Liggins, Customer Service Director  
Donna Lewis, Customer Service Manager  
Johnnie Hemphill, Chief of Staff  
Michele Quander-Collins, Public Affairs Dir.  
Avis Russell, General Counsel  
Linda R. Manley, Board Secretary

**I.** Mr. McPhail called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m.

**II. Committee's Work Plan and Goals/Measures Survey Follow-up**

The discussion began with verifying that there had been no revisions to the work plan matrix since the last committee meeting. Mr. Hemphill gave an overview of the four revisions suggested by the Committee at its May 11, 2006 meeting. He pointed out that three of the four revisions were highlighted under the performance measure column and that the fourth revision appears on the workplan matrix under the Board Committee work plan section, second to the last bullet. Information from the departmental work plan has been incorporated in the Committee's work plan in an effort to provide concise and measurable items. In addition, staff added the last column with dates as supplemental information.

Mr. McPhail suggested adding an additional objective under 1.41. "Expand the participation effectiveness of the SPLASH Program". The Committee noted that they would like to see measurable goals that clearly states whether or not the objective has been met by the Committee in the first column of the matrix, e.g. what actions are going to be undertaken to meet the objectives and how the actions are going to be measured. The Committee requested the revised matrix be sent to Committee members prior to the September committee meeting. The Committee also noted that their work plan should not cover the entire scope of the Staff's work plan, that it should only cover the specific policy issues that the Board is emphasizing. Finally the Committee commended Staff for their efforts in the development of the draft committee work plan.

### **III. Customer Service Report Revisions**

Ms. Liggins reported that the AMR Status in the Customer Service Report for this reporting period reflects the status of the large meters only and that a report on the residential meters would be present next meeting. She noted that staff has incorporated some of the revisions as requested at the last meeting in an effort to make the report more comprehensible. In addition, Ms. Liggins welcomed feedback from the Committee on the revised format to ensure that their expectations are captured. Mr. Gibbs pointed out that the percentages displayed on the pie chart of the customer service report did not add up to 100% and asked if the chart was representative of progression from survey to scheduling to inspection.

Mr. Calero, AMR Project Manager, confirmed that the pie chart was representative of the progression from survey to scheduling to inspection. The Committee agreed that a bar chart to show the progression would be more effective. The Committee commended the staff on the Call Center performance and made the decision to have staff exclude this item from future reports with the exception of unusual events.

Ms. Richardson requested that staff provide the Committee with the opportunity to hear the 60-second radio public service announcement on keeping catch basins clean, which was aired on WMMJ-FM and WOL-AM. Ms. Quander-Collins noted that she would have the audio file sent out electronically to all board members.

Ms. Liggins pointed out that staff added call types in this month's report, but is still attempting to expand the efforts being undertaken to understanding the calls that fall in very broad categories (e.g. billing inquiries and request for general information). Ms. Morgan asked if emergency calls were captured in this report and how an emergency call is classified. Ms. Liggins pointed out that emergency calls were not reflected in the call type report, however they are reflected in the call volume report on page 5 of the Customer Service Report. Mr. Gibbs suggested that staff include two charts to differentiate the calls of the Call Center and the Command Center. Ms. Liggins agreed that two charts could be included in future reports.

A discussion regarding the Lead Command Center clarified that the information in the Lead Command Center section of the Customer Service Report will always be one month behind and that the Lead Command Center handle calls that are specifically lead replacement issues only (e.g. lead samples, filters, questions regarding the contractor). Ms. Liggins noted there are three separate units that handle customer service calls: the Call Center, the Command Center and the Lead Command Center, all of which fall under the Customer Service Department.

Mr. Kiely noted that the calls received by the Lead Command Center today are relatively few in number as compared to two years ago. It has always been the intent that the Lead Command Center calls would be absorbed into the Call Center function and that the Lead Command Center telephone number would be eliminated. The Committee suggested that staff consider integrating water quality issues with the Lead Command Center report.

Mr. Kiely noted that the water quality calls are currently handled by the emergency command center and that they are few in number, perhaps 1 out of 100 calls daily. In addition, most of the calls are mostly related to unidirectional water main flushing, use of a hydrant, water main break, service leak, etc. Mr. McPhail indicated that based on today's discussion, water quality is not an issue and that there is no need for monthly reporting. Mr. Kiely asked the Committee if they were still interested in seeing the AMR revenue included in the monthly Customer and Community Report. The Committee agreed to continue to include the AMR revenue in the monthly report.

The Committee also asked that the entire Board be notified monthly of scheduled ANC and other association meetings.

#### **IV. SPLASH**

Mr. McPhail asked if the Salvation Army reports on a monthly basis to WASA the actual funds used by customers during the month. Ms. Liggins confirmed that Salvation Army does submit this data, however, the current report is always one month behind. The Committee asked that staff include that data with a footnote to explain the reporting period under the SPLASH section of the Customer Service Report.

- **Program Coordinator Update (SPLASH)**

Mr. Hemphill informed the Committee that WASA has communicated its interest to the Salvation Army in entertaining the proposal of another local organization, which would result in the transition to another administrator. The Salvation Army expressed clear appreciation of having had the opportunity to work with WASA and acknowledge that they had not focused on outreach efforts.

Specifically, WASA has received a proposal from Urban League and staff hopes to meet with them next week. WASA has developed draft provisions for a proposal that includes feedback from Customer Service regarding what they regard as significant issues in the administration of the program over the past years. The Committee asked if the Salvation Army receives a fee for the administration of the program. Mr. Hemphill stated that the Salvation Army is entitled to receive 10% of the funds disbursed. Mr. McPhail inquired as to whether the Salvation Army has ever taken the fee. Mr. Hemphill stated that he

does not believe they have. The Committee is now concerned that the Salvation Army is sitting on funds and that they seem to be unable to disburse. Mr. McPhail indicated that he is advocating a greater participation from the Commercial Customers in this program and he assumes that the Urban League will be exploring this option.

Staff anticipates developing an agreement that will work on both outreach to potential customers who would be recipients as well as the corporate community for contributions. Mr. McPhail asked if WASA checks its customer database to ensure that those who should be receiving help are actually getting it. Ms. Liggins noted that WASA has not checked its database to try to determine which customers are eligible for SPLASH. However, WASA does have a database of customers who are eligible for the CAP program. Ms. Liggins expressed concern about WASA taking on the responsibility of retrieving personal information from customers, which is required to determine eligibility. WASA is in full support of continuing to inform customers that the SPLASH program is available as we receive calls and encouraging them to apply for the program.

Mr. McPhail asked how many retail customers does WASA typically shut off per month. Mr. Haynesworth stated that 75 - 110 cut-offs are performed per month. McPhail asked if there was a way to find out if these would be customers who could benefit from the SPLASH program. Mr. Kiely noted that WASA had agreed that SPLASH distribution would be based on the Federal Income Guideline. There is a pool of 1,800 customers who have applied. These customers are also in WASA's CAP Program.

Staff pointed out that WASA should be proactive in communicating to our customers the availability of the benefit of the program and the qualifications for the program. However, WASA should not take on the role of seeking customers out. In addition, the DC Energy Office, who administers the discount CAP program for all of the utilities, also informs customers of the availability of the SPLASH program. The Committee noted that WASA needs to establish a method of checking the efficiency and/or effectiveness of the administrator's work. If there are too many CAP customers who are experiencing terminations, that may be an indication that the message that additional assistance may be available, is not reaching those who can benefit from the program. The Committee asked if the RFP were awarded to the Urban League, would they then be more proactive in this area. Mr. Hemphill stated that the Urban League would be more proactive in getting the message to those who can benefit from the SPLASH program.

The Committee noted that the purpose and objective of WASA interest in SPLASH should be clearly defined and included in the RFP for the potential administrator to ensure that every effort is made to disburse the current funds. Mr. Hemphill noted that they recognize the ongoing issues with the current

administrator and that the objective of this process is to evaluate the current administration and to transition to a new administrator.

Ms. Lewis suggested generating a report of the existing CAP customers whose water has been disconnected in the last year, and to send those customers information regarding the SPLASH Program. The Committee agreed with Ms. Lewis's suggestion. In addition, the Committee requested that staff include data that reflects the total amount of money raised and the number of individuals assisted by the SPLASH program in the Customer Service Report. Mr. Bardin reminded the Committee that the full Board has approved several resolutions expanding the SPLASH program and that it is clearly defined that WASA will not decide who is eligible. The Committee should make sure that whatever its next step is, it fits under the existing policy as approved by the full Board. He also suggested that Staff attempt to seek additional information on who is being affected by cut-offs.

## **V. Annual Water Quality Report**

Ms. Quander-Collins reported that EPA regulations require that an Annual Water Quality Report be sent out to all customers of a water utility and that the utility companies also make a good faith effort to get this information out to its general consumers. WASA's report is sent to every known address in the District. Feedback from customers included comments on the pictures used in the report to the report itself being a lot to read, to simply is the water safe to drink. The Committee inquired about the screening process of the annual report. Ms. Quander-Collins noted that the General Counsel and the General Manager review the draft report before it is published. In addition, pursuant to EPA's request, WASA has agreed to allow EPA the courtesy of reviewing the report before it is published. EPA has followed up with comments; some suggestions were incorporated in the report and some were not.

Mr. Cotruvo commended staff on the water quality report and stated that it has much more information in it that is required. Staff indicated that the objective for the next year is to scale the report down. There was additional discussion on how the report could be scaled down and changing some of the special language that is required by EPA that is not necessarily grammatically or scientifically correct. The Committee suggested that WASA communicate with EPA prior to the next report to attempt to address some of these areas. The General Counsel pointed out that the challenge in areas where specific language is required by EPA, is that it would have to be addressed by the USEPA on a national level and not just at the local level. Mr. Hemphill shared with the Committee the ongoing efforts in attempting to get some of the required language revised regarding the lead and copper rules for the CCR. While it is a worthwhile effort in terms of ensuring effective public communications, this process was initiated three years ago.

## **VI. Customer Awareness Strategies for Major Environmental/Capital Programs**

This discussion centered around a previous request from the Committee to provide a four-page summary for the utility's communication strategy for Retail Rates, CSO, Egg-shaped Digesters, and the Anacostia River. Ms. Quander-Collins indicated that she needed additional clarification in terms of the issues. Ms. Quander-Collins also reviewed the hand-out she prepared for the Committee and explained that some of the strategies ongoing for public awareness and public support for CSO included direct mailings, public forums, lobbying with the appropriations committee staff and the congressional delegates to generate more funding, etc. The Committee noted that a one page fact sheet should be prepared for each topic to include; 1) why the issue is important, 2) the amount of funding spent, 3) progress to date, and 4) measures and steps WASA will be undertaking to better communicate to the general public and to encourage our stakeholders' involvement. This type of summary would be very useful for Board Members and the General Manager. Mr. Bardin noted that DDOT uses emails to effectively send out updates on various projects and that WASA has a wonderful opportunity because customers are already aware of the issues; we now need to get the success stories out.

## **VII. Update on Website Revisions**

Ms. Quander-Collins gave a brief overview and a hand out, which illustrated the recent changes to WASA's website.

## **VIII. Emerging Issues**

There were no emerging issues.

Mr. McPhail adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:15 p.m.